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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE'S MEETING WITH NEW ZEALAND PERMREP  
BANKS

Classified By: U.S. PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE, FOR  
REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) SUMMARY. In an introductory call by Ambassador Rice, New Zealand PermRep Rosemary Banks lobbied for U.S. support for former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark's candidacy to become Administrator of the UN Development Program. Banks also urged the U.S. to join the UN Human Rights Council, albeit hoping the U.S. would not undermine New Zealand's own candidacy for a seat on the body this year. Ambassador Banks spoke in favor of a draft General Assembly resolution on climate change and the Security Council sponsored by Pacific Island states, and hoped for a "behind the scenes" USG role in promoting UN budget reform when the time comes. Ambassador Rice summarized her top priorities at the UN, and pledged to cooperate closely with her New Zealand counterpart. End summary.

12. (SBU) CLIMATE CHANGE. New Zealand PermRep Ambassador Rosemary Banks welcomed Ambassador Rice to her mission during a February 2 introductory call and solicited the new U.S. top objectives for the crowded UN agenda. Acknowledging that New York was not the center of international efforts to address climate change, Amb. Rice described her role as trying to assist U.S. efforts to smooth the path to a new international agreement in Copenhagen in December, pointing out the powerful climate change team in place in Washington. Ambassador Rice noted that Secretary-General (SYG) Ban had in mind a "mini-summit" in the spring to spur momentum in international talks, but said the U.S. sought more detail before evaluating the offer. Ambassador Banks acknowledged a certain fatigue over high-level UN events that produce little more than rhetoric. Agreeing that climate change and development issues intersect, Banks also noted that the Pacific Island states were pushing a General Assembly resolution linking climate change with the UN Security Council. New Zealand is a co-sponsor of the resolution, but Banks realizes that China, Russia and others have deep reservations. She urged Ambassador Rice to hear directly from the Pacific states as to what they hope to achieve from the resolution.

13. (C) UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL. Ambassador Banks appreciated the new Administration's priority on nuclear nonproliferation and UN peacekeeping operations, which the New Zealander agreed were nearly in a state of crisis. But Banks quickly turned the conversation to the UN Human Rights Council and the "universal" hope that the U.S. would soon join the organization, though without jeopardizing New Zealand's own candidacy to fill a Western Europe and Other Group (WEOG) seat in 2009 elections for the next term. Ambassador Rice noted that the Administration's decision was pending.

14. (C) UNDP SUCCESSION. Ambassador Banks made a plea for U.S. support for former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen

Clark's candidacy to fill the UN Development Program (UNDP) Administrator vacancy. Banks noted that Clark has received a positive response internationally to her candidacy, and that there did not appear to be many other serious candidates in the race. Ambassador Rice praised Helen Clark as a strong candidate and conveyed that the USG had just put forward a short list of highly qualified U.S. candidates for the position, each of whom has an impressive background in development issues and strong leadership and management skills. The two ambassadors shared notes and rumors as to other potential candidates, primarily from African and European countries, and pledged to keep in touch regarding all candidacies. Ambassador Banks opined that the SYG's January 31 deadline for applicants will not stick, and that the ultimate decision could be a long time in coming. She confessed that states seem to place high value on leadership skills, which Clark has in abundance, but also highly value a background in development issues, for which Clark has less experience.

15. (C) UN REFORM. Appreciating Ambassador Rice's busy agenda, Ambassador Banks shared her own interest in UN management and budget reform, saying she highly values the close working relationship that she has had with the U.S. Mission regarding UN's 5th Committee issues. While a mixed bag, Banks felt there has been decent, incremental progress made in UN reform of late, and wondered if the time is coming to take on the controversial issue of reforming the UN's budget cycle. Banks lamented that SYG Ban has not given the topic the concentrated and strategic attention it requires, but sees some signs that developing states are realizing that the UN's current budget cycle system can be run much more efficiently. Noting the danger of too-visible a USG role,

Banks hoped the U.S. could play a vital "behind the scenes" role should a critical mass of developing states agree to meet on the topic. Ambassador Rice noted that the SYG stressed his commitment to UN reform in both her meeting with him, and in his conversation with President Obama, but offered little in the way of specifics. Banks said SYG Ban tends to only get engaged when things "are a big mess."

16. (U) NETWORKING. Ambassador Banks noted that the informal meeting of female PermReps initiated by Madeleine Albright continues to meet periodically, and hoped to have a meeting soon in which to welcome Ambassador Rice. Banks said senior UN officials are also included, and opined that the group could productively meet more often, but currently meet about every other month. Ambassador Rice said she looked forward to being involved.  
Rice